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Speeches in the House of
Commons; on the War Against
the Mahrattas

By
Philip Francis

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S P E E C H E S

IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

ON THE

W A R

AGAINST

THE MAHRATTAS.

BY

PHILIP FRANCIS, ESQ.

“ Magnoperè vos et hortor et moneo, ut his provinciis, seriùs vos
quidem quàm decuit, aliquandò tamen consulatis.” CICERO.

L O N D O N :

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THE
ALPHABETIC TO VINE
ZEDONA ZOLTA

1888

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S. Gosnell, *Printer,*  
*Little Queen Street.*  
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TO THE

EARL OF THANET.

MY DEAR LORD,

I AM much in your debt, and very desirous to acknowledge it. A material service, accompanied with constant kindness and friendship, entitles you to every proof of gratitude, which I can give you. In the country, where you have wisely resolved to fix your residence, your example, I know, is eminently useful. The pursuits, you are engaged in, are of all others the most likely to make you happy in retirement. Yet knowing, as I do, how highly you are qualified for greater occupations, I cannot but regret that you are not called upon to act on a more extensive scale, or in a station better suited to your abilities and to your rank in society. The publication, which I now dedicate to you, con-

tains no principle or opinion, to which, as I believe, you would be unwilling to lend your name. You seriously think, what others are contented to profess, that justice and good faith ought to be observed even to the Mahrattas, and that, in the late wars in India, they were not the aggressors. In these opinions I trust you will find yourself confirmed by the arguments, which I had the honour of stating to the House of Commons, and which I now submit to the judgment of the Public.

PHILIP FRANCIS.

20th Nov. 1805.

MAHRATTA WAR.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

March 14, 1804.

MR. FRANCIS moved, that the 35th clause of the 24th of the King should be read, viz.

“Whereas to pursue schemes of conquest and extension of dominion are measures repugnant to the wish, the honour, and policy of this nation: be it enacted,” &c.

And then addressed himself to the Speaker to the following effect:—In moving to have this clause now read, I have two objects: first, to remind the House of their own unanimous resolution, on which the subsequent Act of Parliament was founded; and then to shew that, in the motion, which I propose to submit to the House, I am governed by that resolution, and aim at nothing but to enforce the execution of that law. In this purpose, and on this ground, I hope for the support and concurrence of the House; because I do not believe it will be asserted by any man, that it is very right to pass laws for the better government of a distant dominion, and very wrong to inquire

whether such laws are obeyed or not. In my opinion, it would be a wiser policy, and a safer practice, not to make any laws, than to suffer them to be slighted with impunity. Habits of disobedience are very catching; and they are the more dangerous in proportion to the distance of the offending parties, and to the facility, which that distance gives them, to conceal or disguise their transactions. I state these principles generally, as a rational ground of parliamentary suspicion and inquiry, whenever the governments in India appear to be engaged in measures, which the law prohibits; and not at all meaning to affirm that such measures, when they are thoroughly examined, may not admit of a sufficient justification. The business and duty of this day does not call upon me to accuse any man, or to affirm that any thing deserving the censure of Parliament has been done. My object is to inquire; and then, according to the result of the inquiry, to desist or to proceed. All I contend for, in the first instance, is that a British Governor, who commences a war in India, is *prima facie*, doing that which the law prohibits; that his own act of itself puts him on his defence; that he is bound to justify on the case; and that, until he has so justified his conduct, the presumptions are against him. All the authorities of this country have united with one voice to condemn and forbid the carrying on war in India for any purpose but defence, or on any ground but necessity. I need

not tell the House, that the practice in India has been almost uniformly, or with very short exceptions, directly opposed to the prohibition. While the Directors of the India Company had any power, they certainly laid down very wise principles, and gave very proper orders on this subject. When their power over their own Governors was found to be insufficient, the Legislature interposed; but, as it appears by the facts, with no more success than the Directors. Since the Prohibitory Act passed in 1784, I appeal to the House whether we have heard of any thing from India but war and conquest; many victories and great acquisitions, with only now and then a short interval of repose, to take breath and begin again. There is another ground of presumption against the necessity and justice of these wars, which seems to me as strong and conclusive as any presumption can be before the contrary is proved; I mean, Sir, that almost all these wars are supposed to originate in acts of provocation and aggression committed by the weak against the strong. The strength of any single Indian state at any time, and now I believe of all of them put together, is not to be compared to the military power and resources of the English. I do not say that these nations have no means of defence, or that the Mahrattas, for example, can do us no mischief; but that, considering the great disparity of force, it requires very clear evidence

to make it credible, that whereas the disposition of the British power in India is always, if possible, to preserve the peace, and to be satisfied with what we possess, this excellent disposition is never suffered to prevail, because the Indian princes are so restless and unruly, that we cannot, in common justice to ourselves, refrain from invading them. The fable says—the fierce, rebellious lamb, would never suffer the mild, gentle, moderate wolf to be quiet : *if it was not you, it was your father.* These propositions *may* be true, but they require some proof; and, when the proof is produced, I shall desire it always to be observed and remembered, that the evidence which comes before us is *ex parte*. We hear little or nothing of what the opposite, and possibly the injured party, have to say for themselves.

Ever since I have known any thing of Indian affairs, I have found that the prevailing disease of our governments there has been a rage for making war. The strong, though ineffectual remedies, which have from time to time been applied to this disorder, are a sufficient proof of its existence. That individuals may find their account in the conduct of such wars, I do not mean to dispute; but I deny that they are or can be for the benefit of the India Company, or the nation, particularly in the present circumstances of the Company's affairs. In these circumstances, and in actual possession of half the peninsula,

you engage in a new war with the Mahrattas, the success of which can give you nothing but an addition of territory, which you cannot keep without an intolerable increase of your military establishments, and a perpetual drain of all your resources, of men as well as money, and which you ought not to keep if you could. Whether the Mahrattas have united in defence of their country, or to carry the war into the heart of our best provinces, as they have done in former times, or with what loss or expense our success against them may have been purchased, are questions on which we are utterly in the dark. ✓ By public report alone we are informed, that a war of great extent at least, and liable to many important consequences, is now carrying on in India, and that no information of it has been communicated to Parliament. Sir, I can safely assure this House, ^ that the Mahrattas, though not capable of meeting us in the field, or at all likely to encounter us in a pitched battle, are nevertheless very well able to do us a great deal of mischief. In the year 1773, the Presidency of Bombay received and gave their protection to a Mahratta fugitive, called Ragoba, and mustered all the force they could collect to escort him back to Poona, and to make themselves masters of that place. If the expedition had succeeded, I do not doubt that the persons, who were engaged in it, would have been very well paid for their trouble. The event was, that

their army was surrounded, starved, and compelled to capitulate. At some earlier periods of the history of India, the Mahrattas have frequently crossed the rivers, and made rapid incursions into the upper provinces of Bengal and Bahar, carrying universal desolation with them wherever they went, ruining the country, and making it impossible to collect the revenues. I know no reason, why they may not make the same attempts again, and with the same success. With such bodies of horse as they can collect at a very short warning, from fifty to a hundred thousand in different quarters, they may pour into our provinces, over-run and lay waste the country, and then make their retreat with the same rapidity, without its being possible for us either to meet or to overtake them. This is their mode of making war, and it has always succeeded with them. They are the Tartars of India. In these circumstances, I ask, is it proper or not that Parliament should know, why this war was undertaken? for what purposes it has been pursued? and with what success it has been attended? and finally, has it the sanction and approbation of the Court of Directors, and of His Majesty's Ministers? I cannot believe it possible. If it should be stated, as I have some reason to expect it may, that the papers, to which these motions allude, have not in fact been received by the Court of Directors, that answer must silence me for the present; but I must say

that, in another point of view, it will be very unsatisfactory. The orders given by Lord Wellesley, in consequence of which the hostilities began upon the Malabar coast, must have been dated some time in June, or early in July last. I beg of the House to observe the dates: we are now in the middle of March; so that eight months and a half must have elapsed since the orders were given, and no information received at home on that subject. This is a case, which the Act of Parliament has foreseen and provided for: the words of the law are, that “in all cases, where hostilities shall be commenced, or treaty made, the Governor General and Council shall, *by the most expeditious means they can devise*, communicate the same to the Court of Directors, together with a full state of the information and intelligence, upon which they shall have commenced such hostilities, or made such treaties; and their motives and reasons for the same at large.” Until it shall appear in evidence, that this delay of information directly from Lord Wellesley is not owing to any neglect or omission of his, I am bound to presume that there is a fault somewhere, on his side. Supposing the measures in question should appear, upon inquiry, to deserve censure, that cause of censure will be greatly aggravated by the neglect of sending home timely information on the whole subject.

I am not able to foresee what sort of objections can be stated to the motions for papers, with which I mean to conclude. I rather hope for the acquiescence of the Noble Lord on the other side. At all events, I hope and expect that personal character, or the personal confidence due to any man, will not be alledged in bar to this inquiry. At present there is no charge, and there ought to be no defence. If I have laid sufficient ground for inquiry, we are bound to inquire. If crimination should follow, it must be answered, not by character, but by proof. When an inquiry was moved for in this House, in the year 1791, into the causes of the first war with Tippoo Sultan, no man's reputation stood higher in the estimation of the public than that of Lord Cornwallis; but I do not remember that any opposition to the inquiry was set up on the score of his personal character, though none was more generally respected. On the contrary, His Majesty's Ministers met the inquiry fairly, and thought they could not defend his conduct better than by giving us all the information they possessed. I hope and I expect that the Noble Lord, now at the head of the Indian department, will follow that example. He professes to invite and encourage a free discussion of all Indian questions. If not, and if the motion, with which I am now about to conclude, should be resisted, I think the House will be reduced to one of these two conclusions;

either that there is something in the personal merits of Lord Wellesley, which entitles him to greater confidence than was thought due to Lord Cornwallis; or that there has been something in his conduct, to which no other defence can be applied but a favourable opinion of his character. I move you, Sir,

“That there be laid before this House, copies or extracts of all dispatches received from the Governor General of Bengal, or from the Presidencies of Fort St. George and Bombay, as far as such dispatches relate to or account for hostilities, now or lately subsisting between the said Governments and any of the Mahratta Princes or States; with the dates of the receipt of such dispatches.

“Copies or extracts of all the correspondence between the said Governments and any of the Mahratta Princes or States, relative to the said hostilities.

“Copies or extracts of all orders or instructions sent to India by the Court of Directors of the East India Company on the same subject.”

LORD CASTLEREAGH said, that Government were not in possession of the circumstances which preceded the rupture.

The motion was withdrawn.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

May 3, 1804.

LORD CASTLEREAGH moved, that the thanks of the House be given to the Marquis of Wellesley, and to the officers and soldiers concerned in achieving our late successes in India.

Mr. FRANCIS.—Mr. Speaker, The motion made by the Noble Lord puts me under great difficulty, and, if it prevails, I think will reduce the House itself to a similar difficulty in its future proceedings on the subject of the war in India. I shall state it fairly as it strikes me, and leave it to the candid consideration and impartial judgment of the House. When I attended yesterday, in consequence of the notice given by the Noble Lord, it was with an expectation, well warranted by the terms in which he gave it, that nothing was intended but a particular vote of thanks, in which I should have heartily concurred, to parties and for services, of which he cannot think more highly than I do. I believed and I expected that the motion would be confined, as I still think it ought to be, to persons and to actions, concerning which there could be no difference of opinion—I mean the eminent gallantry and skill, with which all the military operations against the Mahrattas appear to have been conducted. The memory of the brave men, who have fallen in these conflicts, is entitled to every mark of honour, which this House

has the power of conferring. The services of the survivors have an equal claim to the gratitude of their country. Whether so many valuable lives have been unprofitably lost, in a quarrel, which ought or ought not to be avowed by Parliament; or whether such great exertions have been made with a sufficient consideration of the policy, the justice, and the necessity of the war, are questions, which it was not advisable nor in any shape necessary to be brought this day into debate. The Noble Lord's motion forces them to a discussion without necessity, and in effect decides them without knowledge. The merits of the war itself ought to have been left untouched and entire for future deliberation. By this motion that question is prejudged; or at least the use and effect of that deliberation is precluded. It is impossible for Parliament to go with a free and unbiassed mind to examine the wisdom or the justice of a war, to the author and director of which they have already returned their thanks in such exalted terms, first for the plan, and then for the success of it. The Noble Lord has been very cautious, as he says, not to confound the two questions. He has drawn a line of distinction between the merits and services of Lord Wellesley in his military capacity, that is, for the plan and operations of the war, which cannot be too highly applauded, and the justice or policy of the war itself, which, he says, are still left open to the examination, and

possibly to the censure of Parliament, when the evidence comes before them. This I hold to be impossible in practice. When once this House has pronounced that the plan, the execution, and the success of a great measure deserve your highest approbation, you cannot tread back your steps: you cannot say to the same man, under another character, as if he played two parts in the same performance, that the principles on which he acted deserve your severest condemnation. I put the case as a bare possibility in argument, and not meaning to utter a word, or to breathe a thought in prejudice of that part of the question, which the Noble Lord says is still reserved for a free discussion. On a former occasion, when this subject was first introduced, I flatter myself that the manner, in which I urged an inquiry into the causes of the war in India, existing then, and indeed still existing, without the knowledge of Parliament, had given general satisfaction. I said not one word in disparagement of Lord Wellesley, nor shall I now. No other evidence of the merit of his measures is within our knowledge, but that his measures have succeeded. On that principle, in fair and honourable argument, if his measures had been defeated, we must have condemned him on the principle of his conduct. The Noble Lord, who extols the care taken, and the extraordinary provisions made by Lord Wellesley to guard against defeat and to ensure success, in one

instance forgets himself: he says, that one of General Lake's victories was obtained *by a handful of men against an immense disparity of numbers*. That, indeed, I allow, is saying a great deal for the skill of the General, and for the valour of the army; but it is not saying much for the precautions taken, and the means furnished by the Civil Government. Whatever the event may be, no Government has a right to expect, or to calculate upon the probability that *a handful* of men will succeed against a very superior force. In the first action under General Wellesley, on the other side of India, I know with certainty that his army was in the greatest danger, and that if that most gallant charge made by our cavalry, in the front of which General Maxwell fell, had not succeeded, our army would in all appearance have been lost. I agree with the Noble Lord, that the dissolution of the French force under Monsieur du Perron, which was attached to the service of Scindia, may be a considerable advantage. Whatever it may be, it was collateral and incidental. If I am rightly informed, it was not reduced by force, but came over to us by private negotiation and agreement. The Noble Lord talks with triumph and exultation of the rapid progress of our arms, and the immense acquisitions of territory we have made in the Guzzerat and elsewhere. He forgets that the positive law of this country, founded on the best-considered principles of policy and jus-

tice, and confirmed by the advice of every man in this country whose authority deserves to be regarded, forbids any farther acquisition of territory in India. *Prima facie*, a British Governor, who makes war for the acquisition of territory, offends against the law, and is bound to justify himself on the case before he can be acquitted. On the whole, Sir, it is my opinion, that this Motion of Thanks to Lord Wellesley ought to be deferred. I have no personal object to obtain, or even wish to gratify, in the part I have taken on this subject, unless it is to preserve the consistency of my own character, and to adhere to the principles, with which I set out in the Government of India, and from which I never have departed. Thanks given without knowledge or deliberation do no honour to those who give, or to those who receive them. They have no root, and cannot live. Let the evidence come before us. Let the Noble Lord's conduct be examined, and then if it should appear that the war, in which India is involved, was not voluntary on his part; that it was founded in justice and necessity, I shall be as ready as any man to join in the thanks proposed by this motion. The thanks of the House of Commons, founded on due examination, and including all the considerations that belong to the question, will then proceed with dignity. Their impression will be deep, and their effect lasting. I therefore think that the motion ought to be postponed."

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

January 21, 1805.

Mr. FRANCIS.—The motion, which I mean to submit to the House, will not make it necessary for me to trouble you with many reasons in support of it, or for more than a few minutes; and, indeed, it appeared to me so much a matter of course, that I should not have thought it required a previous notice, but for a suggestion, which I am always desirous to comply with. In the course of the last Session the House thought fit to order a great variety of papers to be laid before them, to explain the causes of the war which began in 1803, against two of the principal Mahratta Chiefs, Scindia and Boosla. By the papers before the House it appears, that those Chiefs were subdued and reduced to submission, and that treaties of peace had been signed with them about the close of the same year; and it was natural to conclude that there was an end of the war in India. Nothing could be more improbable than that any of the remaining Mahratta powers should take up the contest where the others had left it; and especially against an enemy flushed with success, and which the greatest powers of the Mahratta empire had not been able to resist. Nevertheless it is known that another war with another Chief, called Holcar, immediately, or soon after, succeeded to

the pacification with Scindia and Boosla. I consider it as the final act of the same transaction, and that the information before the House would not be complete without the papers relative to these last hostilities, which I propose to move for. I hold it to be of importance to the good government and safety of our possessions in India, that a regular communication of all material transactions there should, at proper intervals, be made to Parliament, and that the record of them should be preserved in this House. I have no doubt that Holcar has been subdued. His force, compared with ours, is so inconsiderable, that one can only wonder at his venturing, at such a time especially, to provoke a quarrel with a power so much superior to him. Nevertheless he has certainly been able to make some resistance, and we know that many lives have been lost already in the course of this petty war. In one of the provinces ceded to us, called Bundelcund, a party of his cavalry surrounded a detachment of ours, consisting of two complete companies of sepoy, some cannon, and fifty European artillerymen, every man of whom were cut to pieces. The loss of the sepoy is to be lamented—that of the artillerymen is invaluable. The main body, from which this little force was detached, immediately retired, and the officer who commanded it was put under arrest. I need not say any more to prove that these transactions deserve the attention of the House. I am not aware

of any reasonable objection to the motion ; but if any should be made, I hope the House will permit me to reply to it. I move you, Sir, “ That there be laid before this House copies or extracts of all letters or correspondence received from India, before or since the close of the last Session of Parliament, relative to hostilities between the British Government and the Mahratta Chief, named Jesswant Rao Holcar, as far as may be consistent with the public service, and with the good faith due to persons, from whom secret intelligence may have been received.”—Before I sit down, I wish to mention a subject connected with the Mahratta war, on which the House has received no information. I expected to find it explained in the printed papers, but in them there is no mention of it. In the country of Guzzerat, to the north-west of Bombay, there is a Prince called Gwico-war : a part of his territory has been ceded to the Company, partly to make good the pay of our subsidiary force stationed at Poona, and for other objects of indemnification. Out of that fund we ought to have received a considerable revenue ; but to that Prince the Government of Bombay have lent a sum not much less than 360,000*l*. The documents relative to this extraordinary transaction, I think, ought to have been laid before the House under the orders already given, which would save time and trouble ; if not, it must be the subject of a particular motion.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

March 28, 1805.

LORD CASTLEREAGH moved for leave to bring in a Bill to enlarge and regulate the powers given to the Governor General and Commander in Chief in India.

Mr. FRANCIS said :—Sir, I see no immediate objection to the provisions of this Bill. The cases stated, though I hope not likely to happen, ought to be provided for. The supposition cannot be made without some painful reflections, that Lord Cornwallis, on his arrival in Bengal, which cannot be computed at less than six months from this period, will find India still involved in war, and that he may be obliged to take the field in person. If that be well founded, it gives us but a melancholy prospect of the state of our affairs in that quarter. I do not perceive that the Bill gives Lord Cornwallis any new or extraordinary powers ; and, if it did, I should not be inclined to oppose it, for two reasons ; first, because I should think it not at all unlikely that the exigency of the case might require such powers ; and then, because I know of no person among those, who have acted in great stations in my time, whom I should be more ready to trust with great power than my Lord Cornwallis. Judging of him by all his public conduct, I am convinced that power

may be safely trusted in his hands, and that he will never use it but for the benefit of the public service. If *my* voice could contribute to his honour, he should have it without reserve, for the spirit that prompts him to undertake such a task, as I know it to be, and at such a time; and if it were possible to give him support in the execution of it by any effort of mine, he might be sure of it. I am convinced that his great object will be to compose the disorders of India, and to restore peace and tranquillity to the unfortunate inhabitants of that country.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Friday, April 5, 1805.

MR. FRANCIS.

Mr. Speaker,

I SHALL have too much occasion to solicit your indulgence on a subject, which I know has no attractions for the House, to waste your time with a long preface. The magnitude of the object, which I mean to bring into your view, no less than a dominion, which in one way or other embraces almost the whole peninsula of India, and the importance of the considerations that belong to it, whether as a conquest to be preserved, or as an estate to be improved, are too evident to be disputed; but I believe it is equally notorious that, in this country and even in Parliament, a general indifference to this great dominion has grown with its magnitude, and that a general neglect of all the national interests connected with it has followed and kept pace with their increasing importance. It looks as if India and its Government had swelled to a size too big for the capacity, or too intricate and perplexed for the comprehension of the House of Commons. If that be so, it is a powerful argument, among many, against the policy, as it is called by some, but, as I say, against

the folly of grasping at acquisitions too extensive to be governed wisely for the benefit of the people, who are subject to your power, or even of being managed profitably to your own advantage. In a possession so remote from the inspection, and, by its extent as well as its distance, so little subject to the direct superintendence of Parliament, abuses of all sorts are very likely to prevail. A territory so circumstanced, if not well governed, that is, with a watchful eye and with a strict attention to the conduct of those, who are deputed to govern it, will assuredly be ill governed; and that misgovernment will not be confined to petty abuses; nor will the consequence of great abuses be confined to that country. The mischiefs, that are suffered to grow and prevail in India, will not stop there: they will be felt here; they are felt already. There is no medium: the evils, inseparable from a ruinous system of government, are progressive in their nature, and cannot be stationary any where; but least of all, where the distance of itself keeps the disorder out of sight. The true state of the case is never known in the first instance. Prevention is never thought of, nor remedy neither but in the last extremity; and, when your orders arrive, the crisis is over. You wait for events till the last moment. You pretend to forbid war, while in fact your judgement of the policy and justice of the measures pursued abroad is always decided by a battle.

This mode of ruling India may suit the rulers there, and the interest of individuals; but it is not the way to make India, what it ought to be, a resource and a benefit to England, or to prevent its becoming more and more, what I know it is already, a perpetual drain of men and money, which the wealth and population of England are not equal to; and, even if they were equal to such a burden for a few years, what public purpose would it answer to hold such a dominion on such terms? If in fact these great acquisitions are too distant or too unwieldy to be wisely managed by the power of this country; or, if the scheme and constitution of a House of Commons are not fitted or commensurate to the government of so great an addition to the empire, that consideration may furnish reasons for contracting or relinquishing the possession, but not for neglecting it. As long as the House of Commons professes to retain its jurisdiction over India, it cannot be improper in any individual, nor in me I hope quite useless, to endeavour to recall the attention of the House to the object of that jurisdiction and to the duties that belong to it. In this place, Sir, I beg leave to say a few words concerning the gratuitous share, which I have so long taken in the affairs of India, without a personal interest or advantage of any kind. Within these few years the constitution of this House has been so much altered, that many of the present Members, not knowing in what relation I have stood

to the Government of India, might possibly think me an intruder on this subject; or that I invaded a department, which did no way belong to me. If that idea should prevail in the minds of any Gentlemen, a very short and a very necessary explanation will set me right in their opinion. My connexion with India began so long ago as the year 1773, when I was appointed to a place in the Government of Bengal by the first Parliamentary appointment that was made for India. The events of a few years placed me next in succession to the office of Governor General, to which, with a very little policy and good management, I might easily have succeeded. While I continued in India, every part of my public conduct was marked by the approbation of the Court of Directors, in whose hands the authority of this country over India was exclusively vested. The honour they did me was pure and unmixed with any proof of their good opinion, that could be attributed to personal favour. On this point, their deliberate judgement with respect to me might possibly be erroneous; but I have very sufficient reason to say that it was perfectly impartial. On my return to England, I found that two Committees of this House were employed in a strict examination of all the transactions in India during the period of my appointment. By those Committees every act, every opinion, I might almost say every recorded word of mine, while I was in office, was

minutely canvassed and reported to the House. In a few years from that time, my conduct, and my character too, underwent a trial of another sort, but much stricter and more severe than even a direct Parliamentary inquiry; I mean in the impeachment of Mr. Hastings. For no man, I think, who remembers the transactions of that period, and knows the disposition of those times, will deny that, while the impeachment lasted, I was in effect as much under trial as if I had been directly put on my defence. Through these ordeals I passed unwounded and unblemished; and not only unwounded and unblemished, but finally honoured by a third Committee of this House with such a testimonial under their hands, as, I believe, has been rarely given to any man. So little of the solid and substantial advantages of life have fallen to *my* lot, that I trust I shall be forgiven for endeavouring to avail myself of this distinguished ornament. If a name, so inconsiderable as mine, should have any chance of surviving me, it can only be under the auspices of those eminent persons, to whom I have alluded, in conjunction with their character, and in attendance on their fame. My other titles to the barren office, in which I am still engaged, consist in long possession, without interruption or competition. Should it ever promise to be more productive, I should not despair of seeing myself surrounded by many competitors. In the mean time, and as long as

there is no prize to be obtained, I may have the race to myself. Finally, Sir, if I had no other title to plead, the state of dereliction, in which the discussion of India affairs has been generally left, leaves it open to the first occupant, to me or to any body.

The amount of what I propose to submit to the consideration of the House will not be proportioned to the mass of the printed papers on the table. A large portion of these papers relates to military operations, to marches, sieges, and battles, with which I have no concern, and shall not meddle. A great part of the remainder consists of details of negotiations, of intelligence, and of other particulars, into which it would be useless for me to enter. Among the rest, there is a voluminous correspondence from the Presidency of Bombay, relating to a censure of their proceedings by the Governor General of Bengal, against which my old friend Mr. *Duncan*, though I cannot perceive that he was at all in the wrong, defends himself with fear and trembling. My purpose is to bring before the House a summary review of the British possessions in India from their origin to the state, in which they stood at the close of the last century, and for a year or two after, when those measures were concerted and carried into execution, which I mean to examine more minutely. To understand the nature and security of your present establishment in India,

you must see how it began, how it advanced, what root it holds by, what principles were adopted by the wisdom and prescribed by the authority of this country for the government of India, what practice followed, and finally on what ground we stood, when it was said to be necessary, about two years ago, to provide for the further defence and security of the British empire in India by those new measures, which produced the Mahratta war. This is a wide circumference; but the passage across it shall be short and rapid. A bird's eye view of the subject will be sufficient.

The origin of our connexion with India and the foundation of our establishment there was commercial. Appearing in the character of merchants, and for many years assuming no other, we were received by the native Princes, not only with hospitality and protection, but with extraordinary favour and encouragement; and certainly, as far as the commercial interests of their subjects or their own were concerned, they acted wisely. In the natural course of things, it is not possible to open a trade of any kind between India and Europe, without making it a channel of profit and an influx of wealth to India. Comparatively speaking, India, and especially Bengal, sells every thing to foreign nations, and buys very little. In this intercourse with Europe, the native Princes saw and understood their immediate advantage. Their commercial eye was open; but their

political eye was shut. They saw that the balance of foreign trade was immensely in their favour; but they did not foresee the fatal consequence of granting to foreign merchants a stationary establishment in their country. The conduct of another Eastern nation, in similar circumstances, exhibits an example of sounder policy. The Chinese will never suffer us to have a footing in China. On this subject, their own institutions are wise, and they know how we have acted in India. From factories to fortifications, from fortifications to garrisons, from garrisons to armies, and from armies to conquest, the gradations were natural and the result inevitable. For my present purpose, it is not material to look back to our transactions in India before the year 1765. Up to that period, our affairs were in a state of progression, without a solid security, and exposed to many hazards. The grant of the Dewanny of Bengal, Bahar, and Orixia, obtained by Lord Clive, gave us a powerful establishment, and in effect a sovereignty in India, under the name or shadow of a country government. From foreign merchants we suddenly became a great territorial and political power; from adventurers, who had every thing to win, we became possessors, who had every thing valuable to lose. No wise man continues the game, by which his fortune is once made. Accordingly we changed, or professed to change,

our maxims with our situation. The fundamental principle immediately recommended by all the authorities abroad, and acknowledged and adopted by all the powers at home, was limitation of dominion. The same great man, to whom we owe the acquisition, and who laid the foundation of our dominion, bequeathed to us the wisest counsels for preserving it. His words are *, “ My resolution and my hopes will always be to confine our conquest and our possessions to Bengal, Bahar, and Orixá. To go farther is, in my opinion, a scheme so extravagantly ambitious and absurd, that no Governor and Council in their senses can ever adopt it, unless the whole system of the Company’s interest be first entirely new-modelled.” On this principle, when the dominions of Sujá ul Dowla, when the whole country of Oude was at his disposal, he restored it to that Prince. To the same effect, there is another authority, particularly weighty in the scale with any argument of mine, I mean that of Mr. Hastings, whose name assuredly I should never have mentioned, if I had not an opportunity of doing it with approbation, as well as with advantage to my opinion. No words can be stronger than those, in which he gives his own. In a letter addressed to the Court of Directors, the President and Council

* Sept. 30, 1765.

of Fort William say *, “ The security and tranquillity of these provinces shall be the ultimate end of all our negotiations; and you may trust, that we are too well aware of the ruinous tendency of all schemes of conquest, ever to adopt them, or ever to depart from the absolute line of self-defence, unless impelled to it by the most obvious necessity, and immediate exigency of the circumstances.

“ Signed, *Warren Hastings and Council.*”

These were the principles most solemnly declared and established by the Court of Directors, in concert with His Majesty’s Ministers, at that time, for the future government of India. In their instructions to the Governor General and Council appointed by Parliament †, their first injunction is *to fix our attention to the preservation of peace throughout India, and to the security of the Company’s possessions.* Their letters are filled with maxims and orders to the same effect. In one of them they say ‡, “ The treaty of Allahabad compels us to assist the Vizier in defending his dominions, in case they shall at any time hereafter be attacked. But, in regard to new conquests, or to any warlike enterprises beyond his own territories, we absolutely prohibit you from

* Nov. 10, 1772.

† Jan. 25, 1774.

‡ March 3, 1775.

employing our troops on such expeditions, *on any pretence whatsoever.*"

" We hereby positively restrict you from all attempts of this nature in future."

In the year 1782, it appears that the House of Commons found reason to conclude, from the Reports of their Committees, that these principles were not enforced by sufficient authority to secure the obedience, or even the attention of Governors abroad; and that the lawful orders of the Directors on this subject were totally disregarded. The House itself therefore, expecting to be better obeyed, after a long and solemn deliberation, unanimously resolved and declared *, " That to pursue schemes of conquest and extent of dominion in India, are measures repugnant to the wish, the honour, and the policy of this nation."

In the year 1784, the resolution of the House of Commons was found to be insufficient. The principle, so declared, was adopted by the Legislature, in the very terms of the resolution; and again, in the same specific terms, by the Act of 1793, when the Company's charter was renewed. Where will you look for a fundamental principle of government, if it is not to be found in these authorities; or what obedience do you expect to any laws, which you may make now or hereafter,

* May 28, 1782.

if these are disobeyed or eluded with impunity? Was the declaration of your opinion obtained by surprise? was it disputed in debate, or carried by an inconsiderable majority? or has long experience made us wiser than we were in 1793? Has the resolution of this House been rescinded? Have the laws been repealed? Are the statutes obsolete? or has the lapse of time been sufficient to make us forget our principles, and to bury our institutions in oblivion? I say that all these authorities united in one fundamental proposition, that the security of your dominion, and of all the national benefits to be derived from it, depended on its limitation. This was the sole object of the wisdom and policy of this country, from the moment when the sudden acquisition of a great territory obliged you to consider and determine, on what principles it ought to be held, and by what limits it ought to be confined. It is also well worth your observation, that this limitation of dominion was prescribed to the Governments abroad, while the French had a real establishment, and sometimes a formidable power in India. At that time, and in those circumstances, new conquests were not thought necessary to counteract the ambition, or to defeat the intrigues of France. The necessity of providing for the security of the British empire in India, by the conquest of the peninsula, was never thought of until the French were extirpated and their power annihilated. We

never pretended to be thoroughly afraid for our safety, until in effect we had no enemy left, and literally nothing to fear. The House, I hope, will bear this observation in mind, until they see, as they will do hereafter, how I mean to apply it. The Legislature, as I conceive, had but one object in declaring, that schemes of conquest and acquisition were repugnant to the policy of this country, viz. to limit our views of dominion to the territory we then possessed. As to wars of direct aggression, it did not require a prohibition to make *them* criminal. Such wars were full as much a crime, and that crime was just as punishable before the Acts of 1784 and 1793 as after them. There was justice in this country, and there were tribunals enough, to which the Governors of India were amenable, before those statutes were enacted. Then what did they prohibit? Why positively nothing, if the construction, now given to them, be true. The Legislature is supposed to hold this sort of language to the Governors abroad: "I forbid you to make unjust or unnecessary wars, for the purpose of conquest or extension of dominion; but, if fortunately you should find yourselves engaged in a just and necessary war, there is an end of all limitation; take every thing you can get. There is no other way of punishing the aggressor, but by taking and keeping his country; you cannot fine him in money; and, as to his forts and his strong holds,

they would give you no security." On this principle, it seems to me something worse than superfluous to make parliamentary declarations against schemes of conquest. The law itself provides the exception and furnishes the evasion. All you want is a *just and necessary war*. The Governors in India, with the evidence in their hands and nobody to contradict them, are not suspected of incapacity to make out a case to suit their purpose. Even in a war in Europe, it is not always very easy to determine, on which side the justice of the quarrel lies. But, as to a war in India, how is it possible for you to decide whether it be just or unjust? What evidence is there before you? What materials have you to judge by? Why, Sir, you have precisely the evidence and the materials, with which one of the contending parties thinks fit to supply you. Now, besides the natural presumption that the weaker party, in any contest, is not likely to be the aggressor, the want of evidence on his side ought of itself to deter you from pronouncing against him. In this last war, for example, with the Mahrattas, do you know what Scindia and Boosla had to say for themselves? Are these Princes before you, by their ambassadors, or even by their letters? In former times there was a department in the Council of Fort William, called the Persian Correspondence, carried on between the Governor General and the native Princes, with whom we

had any business or connexion, and it used to be extremely voluminous. That mode of intercourse with the Indian states seems to be relinquished; the printed papers at least furnish very few letters from the parties engaged in the war. The mode, now adopted, of negotiating with the native powers, is to send British agents to reside with them, in order *to obtain a timely knowledge of their views* *. Through this channel the merits of their cause are represented and received. These agents, I dare say, are impartial; but, at best, they are counsel on both sides; and, when you come to consider their instructions, I think you will not be disposed to give them credit for doing more than rigorous justice to any interests or pretensions, which they might possibly think adverse to those of Lord Wellesley. On this sort of evidence it is concluded †, “that the inability of those Chieftains to alledge any ground of complaint against the British Government, or its allies, affords the most unequivocal proof of the justice and moderation of our proceedings!” As if it were very difficult for the power, that does the injury, to intercept the complaint. Fortunately for our immediate instruction, all the parties, concerned in these transactions on our side, have a marvellous turn for writing; but he, who writes a great deal, will sometimes say more

* Pa. 81.

† Pa. 180.

than he intended. Sooner or later, the truth escapes, and, in that form, is instant death to the digested evidence. I have stated to you the principles, on which the British empire in India ought to have been conducted, and the authorities on which those principles were founded. I shall now submit to the House a view of the practice which has regularly accompanied and gone hand in hand with the principles, up to the end of the last century. I mean to state it as a narrative only, without inquiring into the justice of those wars, or into the motives of those successive acquisitions, by which your empire has been doubled, since the laws of this country declared that it ought not to be increased. In justice to Lord Wellesley, I ought to have added the professed principles and the pacific views, by which he assures you that his conduct has been uniformly regulated. To some of these principles I am ready to subscribe, in the plain and obvious sense of his own words. The first is fundamental, and embraces all his political measures. He says*, “ that every principle of true policy demands, that no effort should be omitted by the British Government to establish a permanent foundation of general tranquillity in India, by securing to every state the free enjoyment of its just rights and independence, and by frustrating

* Pa. 303.

every project calculated to disturb the possessions, or to violate the rights of the established powers of Hindostan and of the Decan." There are many other declarations in Lord Wellesley's letters to the same effect, which it is needless to repeat. Almost all his predecessors have used the same pacific phrases, for the real purpose of interfering perpetually in the affairs of their neighbours. Before you confide in such equivocal professions, look at the history of India from the year 1765, and then look at the map, that closes the history. At that time there was a Nabob of Bengal, who held the Nizamut by the same title, which gave us the Dewannee of that opulent kingdom. He and his family are extinguished. There was a Raja of Benares and a rich domain called Ghazipore. He is gone, and his country melted into ours. There was a Nabob of Oude, in my own time, Vizier of the empire, and the greatest of all the Mahomedan Princes in that part of India. If any of his family survive, they are mere cyphers, subsisting, in disgrace and obscurity, on such pensions, as our Government thinks fit to allow them. *His* country also is annexed to ours. There was a Nabob of Ferrokabad, whose name is hardly known in this House; though once an eminent person among the Princes of India. He and his country have shared the same fate. Beyond him, the Rohillas were a considerable independent nation. They

are extirpated, and the whole of Rohilcund is ours. This last possession carried the frontier and the armies of Britain to a situation considerably to the north of the latitude of Delhi. In that direction, the next step must have been into Tartary. Returning to the sea, you will find the whole line of coast from Bengal to Cape Comorin, with only one little interruption, which has since been filled up, possessed by the English. The Northern Circars have been ours for many years. The lawful Nabob of the Carnatic was our old and faithful ally, as long as he could pay for it. He once had many friends in England, and even in this House. All that we know of him now is that his debts have been paid by the India Company, and that his creditors are as numerous as ever; that, by some means or other, his family is dispossessed, and that their inheritance is absorbed into our dominion. You have heard of a Rajah of Tanjore. In former times, we gave him the title of King. In whatever form he may still be permitted to exist, he is your vassal, and nothing more. The Rajahs of Tinnivelli, Travancore, and others of that rank, are hardly worth mentioning. Their names and titles are all that is left of them. On the Malabar coast, we had as many settlements as we wanted, or as could be of any use to us. To the northward of Bombay we had the city of Surat, with a rich and considerable territory in the Guzzerat held directly or

in effect by us, under the name of a Prince called the Gwicowar. "This state," we are told *, "has for its present native ruler a Chieftain of avowedly weak intellects. Our support therefore must be extended to all the operations of its Government; holding as we do, the immediate charge of the Gwicowar chieftain's own guard, and dividing with his troops the garrison of his capital." In addition to all these possessions, the effective government and a great portion of the revenues of the Decan were united to the British dominion by a subsidiary treaty, concluded in 1798 with the late Nizam, who had long been superannuated. We furnished him with an army to be stationed in perpetuity in his capital, and in return he ceded to us a tract of territory, the revenues of which were to pay the army. This force, in a year or two after, was augmented, and of course the subsidy and a new cession of territory along with it. After that, it signified very little what we kept, or what we left him. This measure carried the British arms and power into the heart of the peninsula. Tippoo Sultan was the last of all the Mahomedan Princes who preserved his independence. In 1799 we attacked his capital, destroyed his government, and disposed of his kingdom by the right of conquest. The merit of this act consists in its being in some

measure provoked, and still more in its being, what it professed to be, an act of open force without any mixture of fraud in it. Part of the kingdom of Mysore was annexed to the Carnatic. The remainder was placed under the pretended government of an infant Raja, descended, as it is said, from princes, who had been dispossessed by Hyder Ally. The whole of the country is ours. The name of the Raja is a mere shadow. General Wellesley says *, “ The Raja, who is said to be five years old, is of a delicate habit; he seems to be of a timid disposition, and to have suffered considerably from restraint.” Lord Wellesley says †, “ His interests and resources are absolutely identified with our own. Under this arrangement, I trust that I shall be able to command the whole resources of the Raja’s territory,” &c. “ It appeared to me a more candid and liberal, as well as a more wise policy, to apprize the Raja distinctly, at the moment of his accession, of the exact nature of his dependance on the Company, than to leave any matter for future doubt or discussion.” - At this point it was natural to expect that the rage for acquisition might have subsided; and the rather as Lord Wellesley himself had declared ‡, “ that the lustre of this last victory over Tippoo could be equalled only by the substantial advantages, which it promised to establish, by

* June 25, 1799.

† Aug. 3, 1799.

‡ May 16, 1799.

restoring the peace and safety of the British possessions in India, on a durable foundation of *genuine* security." This was our situation in the first year of the present century. The security was *genuine*, and the foundation durable. The map will shew you that we were then in possession of at least two thirds of the peninsula. Before the close of that year, however, it was discovered, that the independence and safety of the British empire were not quite secure; though we had contracted our frontier, and made it perfectly defensible by increasing our possessions *. To provide for our future security, the first thing to be done was to find out an enemy and a danger. For this purpose, the regions of possibility are ransacked: you shall see with what success. The formidable force of the French in India, still as active as ever in the year 1801; with a long train of hypothetical cases and consequences from their supposed influence and intrigues, stood first among the dangers, which threatened immediate or future ruin, no matter which, to the British empire. This French force is variously described; sometimes it is a *French army* of fourteen thousand men; sometimes it constitutes a *French state* in

* "As to addition of territories, it cannot have escaped observation that the events, which produced those additions, have at the same time tended to increase the security of your own possessions, *by narrowing their frontier.*" Vid. Mr. Dundas's Letter to the Court of Directors, dated June 30, 1801, p. 15.

the heart of Indostan : at last you find it reduced to a native army commanded and disciplined by French officers, which, with the help of an enormous exaggeration of numbers, may be said to have created something like the shadow of a future danger to the British power, which at that time occupied two thirds of India. In fact and substance, there was none. So long ago as the 4th of April 1794, Lord Melville declared in this House, and it was perfectly true, “ that the effectual check, which, under the conduct of the Marquis Cornwallis, has been given to the Mysorean power, has since, under the same auspices, been followed, by the *total annihilation* of that of the French on the continent of India.” These were his words. I heard them ; but, in stating them now, I do not trust merely to my memory ; as soon as they were spoken, they were written ; as soon as they were written, they were printed and published. The Noble Lord on the other side will find them in the records of the Board of Control. I am far from meaning to blame that practice. On the contrary, I commend it. In July last, the Noble Lord *, alluding to the state of India before the Mahratta war, declared in this House, “ that our empire had been carried to an extent, which left us nothing to fear from any enemy on the continent of India.”

* Lord Castlereagh.

Now, Sir, if it be true, as it certainly is, that the power of the French was *totally annihilated* in 1794, it is difficult to conceive how it revived, and by what means it became so formidable in the course of five or six years after its total annihilation. In the year 1798, Lord Wellesley says, "there was a French party at Hyderabad, which he thought necessary to expel. The amount of the French force, disarmed on this occasion, was about eleven thousand men, and the operation was happily effected without bloodshed and without contest." And well it might. A mutiny had broken out in the French camp, and the sepoy had imprisoned their officers. "The greatest difficulty we had to encounter, was that of rescuing the imprisoned officers from the violence of their own sepoy." These officers, it appears, were soon after sent to Europe. That a corps of natives, so disciplined and so disposed, might be a distress to the Nizam, is not unlikely; but that it should be formidable to the British power is impossible. Then what was left? a very few French officers, who entered into the service of Scindia. The fact is, that there was no *French army* in India in 1801; I mean consisting of any number of native French, great or small. The words are fallacious. They first make an impression in one sense, and, when that won't do, they are explained into another. Among the European officers in the service of Holcar and Scindia there were seve-

ral British subjects, whom Lord Wellesley recalled by proclamation. Among the privates, there were a few Portuguese and possibly a few Germans. Of native French, I can find but one man. Still, however, it might be supposed that the number of French officers was not quite inconsiderable, and, some day or other, might possibly be formidable, by their military skill, by their political influence, and above all things by keeping open a channel of intercourse and connexion between the Mahrattas and the French Government, and a door to the future introduction of a French army. Now, Sir, I will not dispute the physical possibility of a powerful army being transported from France to India and landing there; but it is on one condition only, that the Government of England and India is asleep, and suffers such a fleet to make such a voyage, and to land such an army, without interruption. Much less will I deny that we have thoroughly disposed the minds of the natives to receive them. But that these Mahrattas, if they possess common sense, should naturally wish to invite a foreign army even of friends into their country, or to make it the seat of war between two foreign powers, is a proposition in no case likely to be true. In this case, I shall prove it to be false. All that the Mahrattas desire, either of the French or English, is to suffer them to be quiet, or to settle their internal quarrels among themselves.

From the evidence on the table, as well as from the reason of the thing, I affirm that the Mahrattas had no such disposition as that, which is imputed to them; that they were not inclined to any European alliance, and that they were particularly averse from any connexion with the French. Lord Wellesley himself says *, “that it cannot be supposed, consistently with the character of the Mahratta nations, that any of the confederate States would enter into an alliance with France, under any circumstances less urgent than the pressure of absolute necessity and self-preservation.” In another place he says †, “that it would require a most violent exercise of injustice and oppression on our part, to dispose the suspicious and cautious councils of the Court of Poona to favour the progress of a French force in India.” I am far from objecting to the policy of making it impracticable, if we can, for the French to keep or to recover a territorial footing in India. What I object to is our making use of the name of a pretended *French* power, which in fact did not exist, and which had no root nor hardly the fibre of a root left in India, for the real purpose of destroying the very few independent States, that still survived the general ruin of the peninsula. After all that has been said of the danger to be apprehended from these French officers, I

* Pa. 37.

† Pa. 185.

can scarce hope for credit with the House, when I affirm, from a strict and repeated examination of these papers, that I cannot find the names, or an allusion to the names of more than a dozen. There might possibly be a very few more obscure individuals, whom I have not been able to trace; but I do not believe it. These were with Scindia—not one in the service of Holcar—not one in the service of the Raja of Berar, or of the Peshwa. With respect to the political influence, which these officers might possibly possess or obtain in the councils of Scindia *, I cannot discover that we had any thing to apprehend from it. Long before the commencement of the war in 1803, the principal person among them, M. Perron, had avowed his intention of relinquishing Scindia's service. In June 1803 Lord Wellesley says, "It was generally believed, that Scindia had no confidence in M. Perron's attachment to his Government. Scindia retains no efficient control over M. Perron, or over his regular troops. In various instances, M. Perron has either openly disobeyed or systematically evaded the orders of Scindia." The fact is, that M. Perron had amassed a considerable fortune, with which it was his anxious desire to retire to Europe; and that for this purpose "he had, some time before August 1803, preferred an application to the British Government for permission to enter the British

* Pa. 155.

territories, in prosecution of his intention to retire from the service of Dowlat Rao Scindia ; with which application the Governor General immediately complied ;" though it was not carried into effect until some time after. M. Duboigne, who preceded Perron, and who originally went, with our permission, from our service into that of Scindia, had taken the same course. They knew their own weakness and precarious situation ; and therefore the object of all of them, or at least of as many as had made a fortune, was to return with it to Europe. Nothing was easier than to obtain the removal of them all by pacific measures, which at least ought to have been tried, or by offering them a retreat ; and, while they remained, they were in fact of little consequence, and of none at all in a political sense. The station and the force, allotted to them by Scindia, were evidently intended as a barrier against our aggressions. He never would have resorted to so hazardous a measure, if he could have relied on the good faith of the British Government. But it is said that, independent of their numbers, these French officers were formidable to us in another point of view, viz. by introducing European tactics and discipline into the Mahratta armies, and teaching them possibly to encounter us in the field with equal skill and with our own weapons. When a purpose is to be served, it is not very difficult to find a principle to answer it. I entreat

the attention of the House for a moment to the consideration of this question. If it be true that the French have taught the Mahrattas these tactics and this discipline, I believe it will appear that a more ruinous and unfortunate lesson could not have been given to the people, who endeavoured to learn it. I believe that their misfortunes in this war may in a great degree be attributed to their imperfect proficiency in those instructions, and to their confidence in the skill, which they thought they had acquired in that sort of discipline. This false confidence has led them to abandon their old established mode of warfare, in which long use and the nature of their military force, consisting chiefly of light cavalry, gave them many advantages against armies much better disciplined, and which they never thought of encountering in pitched battle; I mean, in former times. You know how the Roman armies were harassed, distressed, and defeated by the Parthian horse, who seldom or ever could be brought directly to action. They carried on the war, as the Mahrattas might and ought to have done against us, by the use of their cavalry only, by skirmishing, by perpetual alarms, by interrupting the line of march, by cutting off the supplies of provisions, by plundering the baggage, and even by overwhelming the **Roman** camp with clouds of dust. These are great advantages against an invading enemy, who have not only a hostile country, but

a burning climate to contend with, and who must carry their provisions with them, with an endless train of draught and carriage cattle, or be supplied from a great distance. See what Holcar, a mere adventurer and freebooter, as he is called by Lord Wellesley, but certainly, excepting his own personal qualifications, an inconsiderable Chief compared to the others—see what he has been able to do single-handed, by confining himself to the true Mahratta mode of war. Considering the circumstances, in which he came alone and at last into action, the resistance he has been able to make and the mischief he has done, against a superiority of British force as well as skill, is wonderful. Then judge of what the consequences might have been, if the whole power of the Mahrattas had been united in defence of their country, and if they had conducted the war on the true Mahratta principle, on which Holcar appears to have acted as far as we are informed. They relied on the discipline of their infantry, and on the use of their heavy artillery; that is, they confided, as we are told, in the instructions of the French, and they have been every where defeated. If that be so, we have no reason to regret the influence of the French over the military councils of the Mahrattas. I cannot quit this subject without observing that the opinions I have now stated were not originally my own, and that I am by no means singular in adopting them, as I have

done long before the present question occurred. Many years ago, in a conversation with Mr. Hastings, I expressed to him some anxiety about the progress, which, as I had then heard, the Mahrattas were making in the art of casting cannon, in the use and practice of artillery, and in the discipline of their infantry; and I perfectly remember his answer, for it certainly made an impression on my mind, though I was not convinced by it. He said: "Sir, the danger you allude to is imaginary. The Mahrattas never can be formidable to us in the field, on the principles of an European army. They are pursuing a scheme, in which they cannot succeed; and, by doing so, they detach themselves from their own plan of warfare, on which alone, if they acted wisely, they would place their dependance." I hold myself bound to acknowledge the sagacity of this remark, because at the time, when it was made, I certainly did not give it so much credit as I have done since. The House has now seen the full amount and value of all the apprehensions said to be entertained of the French, first of their military power, and then of their political influence, and of all the remote possibilities, in argument at least, which might or might not be deduced from the supposed existence of such power and influence. This sort of future danger, which might *eventually menace** the future security of the British

* Pa. 186.

empire in India, is strongly stated; but it is not implicitly relied on. Military measures, taken for *security*, must suppose a case of evident hazard at least, if not of positive necessity. Accordingly you will find that we had another set of dangers ready for the service; and these to be logically derived, in the form of a dilemma, from the state of the Mahratta empire within itself. This new set of dangers proceeds upon two principles, not only distinct, but adverse to each other. We may take our choice. The first event to be dreaded was, "that no ultimate issue of the distractions at that time existing in the Mahratta empire could reasonably be supposed, which would not have consolidated, under one head, a degree of power and dominion dangerous to the British Government." The second was, "that the effects of those convulsions in the Mahratta state *must speedily* have extended to the contiguous dominions of our ally the Nizam, and ultimately to those of the Company, and would have *compelled* the British Government to engage in the contest." With respect to the first of these dangers, it appears that in August 1799 the Governor General was of opinion, "that the consolidation of the power of the Mahratta empire was highly improbable," and, at a later period, that the contending interests of the several feudatory Chieftains appeared to afford a sufficient security against any dangerous consolidation of the Mahratta power." With re-

spect to those speedy or ultimate dangers, to which the dominions of our ally the Nizam, or those of the Company, might be exposed by the effects of a protracted warfare in the Mahratta state, it appears to me, in the first place, of all things the most improbable, that any one of those contending Chiefs, weakened as they all were by their intestine quarrels, should have ventured to provoke the British power, by an act of aggression, to unite with his immediate domestic enemy. What consequence could he expect from it, but to be crushed between them? But, were it otherwise, I ask the House, whether these remote possibilities are to be admitted as a solid justification for invading their country, for taking an active part in their quarrels; and finally, for crushing them all under the same weight. A house or a village in the neighbourhood is on fire, and this fire may possibly reach us some time or other. So, to put out the fire, we extinguish the people. The very pretences set up are sufficient to shew that we had no solid ground of hostility to these people, and that, though we could not find a danger, we were determined to find a quarrel. I come now, Sir, to the course that was taken to furnish a colour for our subsequent interference in the affairs of the Mahrattas. We did not begin with a direct denunciation of war against any of them, because it was impossible to frame a pretence for it. In the last thirty years, the Mahratta Chiefs

have been often at war with one another; but I affirm, without a reserve of any kind, and I defy any man to prove the contrary, that they never committed an act of aggression, of injury, or even of provocation, great or small, against the English, at any period within the memory of the present times*. In the course of the year 1801, if not sooner, it appears that Lord Wellesley conceived a project of establishing a system of general defensive alliance between the British power and the several Mahratta states, under the same conditions, which had been established with the Nizam in 1798. Who were the enemy, or what was the danger, against which this defence was to provide, is not stated; nor am I able to conjecture. There was no other power then left in India, but that of the two contracting parties, namely, the English on one side, and the Mahrattas on the other. We were at peace and in amity with all of them. We were in alliance with Scindia, and the Peshwa was our particular friend. The course

* In Lord Wellesley's letter to the Directors, dated July 13, 1804 (intercepted by the French), it is asserted, that "the influence and ascendancy of Scindia over all the Mahratta States and even at Hyderabad, had been for some years uniformly directed against the British power in India." An assertion, so positive and so comprehensive, ought to have been proved by some facts, or supported by some evidence. The contrary is notorious. In the last war against Tippoo Sultan, Scindia took no part against us. With the disposition imputed to him, he would not have neglected so favourable an opportunity to injure us.

taken, to establish this general defensive alliance, was to propose to each of the Mahratta Chiefs a subsidiary treaty. As I date and originate the war, that followed, from the attempt to carry this project into execution, I am bound to explain to the House, in Lord Wellesley's own terms, what was meant by a subsidiary treaty; and, to illustrate this point, I shall quote the first example that occurs in the papers on the table. The Maraja Dowlut Rao Scindia is or was a Prince at the head of a great dominion, and perfectly independent, of *us* at least. For though, to suit a purpose, he and the Raja of Berar are often called the *servants* of the Peshwa, it is not true in fact, nor is it possible that Lord Wellesley could have considered him in that light. The Peshwa himself is properly no more than the first executive Minister of the empire. In relation to the other Mahratta Chiefs, he is *primus inter pares*, and some of the formalities, implying an acknowledgment of this superiority, are observed to him. He is not their sovereign, much less is he their *master*. Lord Wellesley would never have levelled himself and the British Government with a pretended Chief, who in fact was only the servant of a higher power. Now he constantly negotiates with Scindia, as with an independent state. The treaty, which his Lordship proposes to him in 1802, is no where supposed to want the ratification or even the consent of the Peshwa. It ap-

pears also that Scindia was guarantee to the treaty of Salbye between the Peshwa and the English, an office and character evidently incompatible with the state of a vassal. To this Prince, who was in perfect amity and even in alliance with us, and with whom we had never had a quarrel or difference of any kind, an English gentleman is deputed, in January 1802, to propose a treaty of alliance to him on the following conditions, viz. "To subsidize a considerable British force to be stationed within his dominions: secondly, To cede, in perpetual sovereignty, to the Company an extent of territory, the net produce of which shall be adequate to the charges of that force: thirdly, To admit the arbitration of the British Government in all disputes and differences between Scindia and his Highness the Nizam, and eventually between Scindia and the other States of Hindostan: and fourthly, To dismiss all the subjects of France now in his service, and to pledge himself never to entertain in his service persons of that description." The cession of territory, demanded in lieu of the subsidy, was that part of the Duab [a kind of Mesopotamia between the Jumna and the Ganges] which was in Scindia's possession, and the fortresses of Agra and Delhi. As these countries were to be ceded to us in perpetuity, it follows that our army was to be perpetually stationed in Scindia's dominions. Lord Wellesley, it is true, did not expect that Scindia would

yield *at once* to the full extent of these concessions, in return for a military force, which he did not want, and never did desire, for the defence and security of his possessions, which were in no danger. His Lordship, adverting to the jealousy of the Mahratta character, entertains considerable doubt of Scindia's consent to subsidize so large a force, and accordingly he authorizes the Resident to agree to a limitation of the force, and to other modifications of the articles proposed. The essential object is to get a footing in his country. The third of the proposed conditions is not to be insisted on, and for a very good reason, viz. "because, without any specific stipulation, the arbitration of the British Government will necessarily be admitted to an extent proportioned to the ascendancy, which that Government will obtain over Scindia under the proposed engagements, and to the power, which it will possess, of controlling his designs." The House will now judge, whether it required an extraordinary degree of jealousy, supposed to belong to the Mahratta character, to induce Scindia to hesitate about accepting the voluntary assistance of a foreign force, on terms, which it was not difficult to foresee would give us an ascendancy over him, and a power of controlling his designs. Lord Wellesley appears to have placed great confidence, and I dare say very justly, in the talents and skill of Colonel Collins. Yet there is a part of the task

assigned to that officer, in which I doubt much, whether any human ability could have succeeded. The instruction I allude to is delivered in the following terms *: “ Whatever proposals you may offer to Scindia, under the foregoing instructions, should be stated to him in the light of a *concession* on the part of the British Government, tending to the security of his interests and the stability of his dominion, not as directed to objects in any degree necessary to the security of the British empire in India.” I cannot find that Colonel Collins had an opportunity of carrying his instructions into effect, or that the plan of the proposed treaty was formally communicated to Scindia ; but it does appear that certain parts of it had come to his knowledge previous to Colonel Collins’s arrival at his Court. Some months before this transaction, a similar subsidiary treaty had been proposed to our friend the Peshwa ; and as, at that time, he really wanted assistance against Holcar, it appears that he was disposed to subsidize a body of British troops, to be ready for his service, but by no means to be stationed within his territories. Colonel Palmer observes, that *the suspicious motive, which dictated this restriction, was too obvious* ; and here he says his negotiation must terminate. The Peshwa’s Minister declared, “ that he could not make further cessions, without a ruinous dereliction of power and property.” Yet, of all the

* Pa. 9.

Mahratta Chiefs, the Peshwa was the only one, to whom such a treaty could be of any immediate service. How unwilling he was to purchase that advantage, on the terms proposed to him, cannot be better expressed than in the memorable words of Colonel Palmer, to which I entreat the attention of the House *: “ I am to have my last private audience of the Peshwa this evening, when I will make a final effort to convince his Highness *of the lasting security, power, and prosperity*, which he will derive from embracing your Lordship’s proposals; though I apprehend, that nothing short of imminent and certain destruction will induce him to make concessions, which militate with his deep-rooted jealousy and prejudices, and of which he thinks that he has already made extraordinary sacrifices.” Colonel Close, who succeeded Colonel Palmer, and who took up the negotiation where he left it, says †, “ Every day’s experience tends to strengthen the impression that, from the first, your Lordship’s *amicable and liberal views*, in relation to this state, have not only been discordant with the natural disposition of the Peshwa, but totally adverse to that *selfish and wicked* policy, which in a certain degree he seems to have realized. A slight recurrence to the history of his machinations is sufficient to demonstrate that, in the midst of personal peril and the lowest debase-

* Pa. 40.

† Pa. 42.

ment, he viewed the admission of permanent support from your Lordship, as well as the relinquishment of his pretended demands on his Highness the Nizam, with the deepest aversion." It was in vain that both Palmer and Close "united in presenting to his Highness's attention the *great liberality and favourable tendency* of his Lordship's views and propositions, and the substantial benefits, which would necessarily result to his Highness's government, from their being speedily carried into effect." He was willing enough to accept of our assistance against Holcar, and to pay for it by assigning to the Company in perpetuity a territory producing twenty-five lacks of rupees annual revenue; but he never could be brought to perceive the advantage and security to himself of allowing to this army a permanent station in his capital, or in the centre of his dominions. The House will judge, whether the Peshwa's resistance to this proposition was natural and reasonable, or whether it could only be accounted for by the innate craft and insincerity of his character. In the course of the succeeding year, the Peshwa's situation was materially altered. His forces, united with those of Scindia, were totally defeated by Holcar on the 25th of October 1802. He retired from Poona to Bassein in the neighbourhood of Bombay, where, having no other remedy or refuge left, he submitted to accept of our

assistance on whatever *equitable and moderate* * terms we thought fit to prescribe, and signed the fatal treaty of Bassein †, by which he agreed to receive a British force to be stationed in perpetuity in his territories. Our army escorted him to Poona, and replaced him there in a state of perfect personal safety, under the guard and protection of a British garrison; that is, with the free agency of a state prisoner, and the security of a prison. By the second article of this treaty, “we are at all times bound to maintain and defend his Highness’s rights and territories, in the same manner as the rights and territories of the India Company are now maintained and defended.” This engagement, I conceive, on the face of it is equivalent to, if not exactly the same with a formal guaranty of all his remaining dominions. But, in this case, the guaranty is positively forbidden. The Governor General had no legal power to bind the India Company by any stipulation to that effect. By the 42d clause of the Act of 1793, it is declared that “it shall not be lawful to enter into any treaty for guaranteeing the possessions of any country Princes or States, except in the case where hostilities have actually been commenced, or preparations actually made for the commencement of hostilities against the British nation or their allies.” The case excepted did not exist, when

* Pa. 151.

† December 25, 1802.

the treaty of Bassein was made. No hostilities had commenced; no preparations for the hostilities, described by the Act of Parliament, were actually made, or, as it appears, even thought of by any of the surviving powers of India. The guaranty, given to the Peshwa, was therefore an act, which the Governor General took upon him to execute against the positive prohibition of the law. I know very well that there is no reality in this transaction. I know that the pretended guaranty of rights and territories to a passive being, who has no will of his own, who has no remedy, and who can neither deliver his country, nor emancipate himself from the dominion of a foreign army, is a mere mockery of his helpless condition. With respect to the Legislature here, the thing, which the treaty professes to do, is forbidden. On this side, the act is criminal, not in itself, but because it is illegal: on the other, it constitutes something worse than a positive offence. The Peshwa is your prisoner. You contract, or pretend to contract with a party, who is not a free agent, and you profess to secure him in his rights and possessions, while his person is in your custody, and the whole of his political power is at your disposal. The subsidiary treaty with the Nizam, concluded in 1798, is said to have been approved of by the Select Committee of the Court of Directors,

and on this the plan of a series of similar treaties, which were to include all the remaining independent Princes of India, was professedly founded. Nothing can be more simple than the principle, nor more effectual than the operation of a subsidiary treaty. If once you can persuade the Nizam, the Peshwa, or any other native Prince, for whom you happen to have a particular friendship, that his government is in danger, and that his person is not safe without your assistance, the business is done. A British army is on the frontier ready to march the moment the treaty is signed, enters his country, takes possession of his capital, and secures him in his palace. If he should happen to be a short-sighted, narrow-minded person, or not sufficiently quick in accepting these proofs of our friendship, there are various ways of convincing him. Sword in hand is the shortest. Dowlut Rao Scindia and the Raja of Berar might have purchased our assistance, and provided a security against all their enemies, if they had any, on the same friendly terms, on which we had yielded it to the Nizam, and to the Peshwa. But they, it seems, not only declined our amicable offers for themselves, but formed a confederacy to resist the execution and defeat the effect of the innocent treaty of Bassein! Supposing this to be the fact, and this fact to be the origin of the war against them, as I believe it was, the question is fairly

before Parliament. In behalf of these Princes, who have no advocate or representative here, I am at issue with Lord Wellesley, and I appeal to the judgment of this House and of the nation on his own case, and on his own shewing. Were they or were they not the aggressors? I pass by the opprobrious epithets and personal reproaches, with which the names and characters of these great persons are perpetually loaded. A language, so unfit to be used, deserves no answer. The Mahrattas preserve their dignity at least, and, in the face of the grossest provocation, never violate the forms of moderation and decorum. Whether they were in the right in endeavouring to prevent or defeat the establishment of a foreign military power in the heart of their empire, is a question to be decided by the sober wisdom and justice of this House, not by the pretended passions of their accusers. The Peshwa, it is alledged, is an independent Prince; and not only independent of the other Mahratta Chiefs, but properly their sovereign and their master; consequently he had a right to make the treaty of Bassein, "and any attempt to obstruct the operation of it, on their part, must be deemed an act of hostile aggression against the Peshwa, and the British Government*." In the first place, the allegation is not true; and, if it were, I should equally deny the conclusion.

As far as the Mahratta empire has any regular constitution, or, at least, as far as we are acquainted with it, the Peshwa is not the sovereign; he is only the representative of the Raja at Sitara, and chief executive officer of that Raja's government. The purpose, for which these fallacies are introduced, requires no explanation. If the Peshwa be the sovereign, and if he is in our hands and at our disposal, in what state are those Princes, whom we call his subjects and his servants? They are bound by his acts, and must follow his fortune. *His* slavery includes theirs. They can have no will of their own. Then why do we send ambassadors to negotiate with such persons? Why do we endeavour to make separate treaties with them, or offer them assistance to maintain their independence, and to guarantee their dominions? Let it be granted nevertheless, that these great Chiefs are, in point of rank, subordinate to the Peshwa, and more or less dependent on his authority. Though we do not exactly know the extent of his legitimate power, or the precise forms of that government, I can readily believe that, in the general councils of the Mahratta empire, the Peshwa's precedence is still acknowledged, that he is first among his equals, and that his consent is admitted to be necessary to any general resolution that binds the state, especially in its transactions with foreign powers. In the perpetual revolution of human affairs, it often

happens that the forms of power survive the fact. The power of Scindia and Boosla was real, and real power never submits to form, but for its own accommodation. In this case however, let the form or the principles of the Mahratta constitution be what they may, there was nothing problematical in the danger, with which the independence and safety of every member of that community was threatened by the treaty of Bassein. It is said indeed that the admission of a British army into Poona, into the Peshwa's residence, into the capital of the empire, and its being stationed there in perpetuity, was no way offensive or dangerous to the other members of the Mahratta state; being intended "as a security to *them* for their rights, possessions, and independence." As I do not know that these arguments were directly made use of to Scindia, or Boosla, or Holcar, I shall leave them to the judgement of the Court of Directors and of this House, for whose instruction they appear to have been intended. Instead of attempting to refute such mockeries, allow me to state a possible case, which, if it existed in the actual situation of Europe, as it may do hereafter, would be very near a parallel to this, which is before us. The fact would come home to the understanding of all men, and the consequence require no argument to enforce it. After what we have seen within these very few years, nothing, that may happen hereafter, ought to be quite

unexpected. In looking forward to future events, we have no right now to limit our calculations by the ordinary rules of probability. But, whether the supposition I am going to state be thought extravagant or not, it will serve to illustrate the case in hand, and to establish the conclusion, which I mean to draw from it. Suppose that, in consequence of dissensions in the German empire, or any other misfortune or misconduct of his own, the present Emperor of Germany should find himself compelled, or should think himself obliged to quit his dominions, and to take refuge with the present Emperor of France, who might not only offer him an asylum, but promise to reinstate him, if he would accept of the assistance of a French army for that purpose. In comparing the Peshwa to the Emperor of Germany, I grant every thing, that can be claimed in favour of his independence as a sovereign prince, and of his right to contract any engagement with any foreign state. I do not believe that independence, to that degree or to that extent, is attributed to the office of Peshwa, or that he himself pretends to it. I do not think it can be maintained that the most despotic prince, in the most enslaved nation, let his supreme authority or personal power be what it may, is competent to surrender the dominion of his country to a foreign state, or to govern it by a foreign army. Again, let it be supposed that the Emperor, believing his situation to be desperate,

or that he has no other remedy, submits, with great reluctance and after long hesitation, to a subsidiary treaty with his new friend, by which he engages to receive a French army into Vienna, to be stationed there in perpetuity, to serve him as a guard against his rebellious Electors, and for the security of his person and government; and that in return he should make a cession of Bohemia, or of some other great portion of his hereditary dominions, for the payment of the troops so employed in his service. In that event, I ask you what would be the right and duty of the other great members of the Germanic body? What would the rest of Europe, and, above all, what would this country say of the powerful Electors of Saxony and Brandenburg, of Hanover and Bavaria, if they submitted to see the Empire invaded and dismembered, their capital garrisoned, and their Chief enslaved by a foreign army, commanded by the natural and inveterate enemy of Germany, or even by the forces of a friendly power? Would you endure to hear it asserted that they had no right to interpose, that the Emperor was an independent sovereign, that he was competent to make such a treaty without consulting the Diet, and to introduce and establish the force of France in the heart of Germany? The Emperor himself might possibly be pitied and forgiven; because no man would believe that, on his part, such a sacrifice of himself could be vo-

luntary. But what should we say of the other Princes of the Empire, if they yielded for a moment to such pretences? My answer is, that there would be but one voice and outcry in this House and in this nation to reprobate the folly, the treachery, and the cowardice of the Electors of Germany. We should even forget our animosity to Buonaparte in our abhorrence of their conduct. Compare the cases. What have the Mahratta Chiefs done or attempted to do, which was not warranted by their duty to their country, by the most obvious principles of policy, and even by the necessity of self-defence? But it is said that Scindia and Boosla made no objection to the treaty of Bassein when it was communicated and explained to them, and that they confessed that it contained no articles injurious to their rights, or incompatible with their safety. Such admissions on the face of them are incredible, not so much because they must be false, as because no rational being could expect that the party, to whom they were made, could possibly believe them to be true. So it is stated however, and so we may presume it was understood by Lord Wellesley's agents. We seldom know what the Indian Princes have to say for themselves, in their own terms. But, be it so. They held a soft and moderate language, they endeavoured to put us off our guard, while they were preparing to defeat our operations, and if possible to expel us from

their country. Such a policy, for purposes much less to be justified, is not uncommon in Europe, and never yet was thought treacherous or criminal, especially on the side of the weaker party, and that party not the aggressor, but driven by the insatiable ambition of a powerful invader to provide for its defence; as if injured weakness had no right to any arms, but those, which the violent aggressor thinks fit to prescribe to it, or as if there was no treachery on our side, in endeavouring to persuade them to receive a foreign army into their capitals for the sincere and friendly purpose of securing their independence. The opprobrious language, in which the conduct and personal character of these Princes is described, without a single fact to support the charge, the duplicity, falsehood, treachery, and restless spirit of avarice and aggression, with which they are incessantly reproached by the Ministers of our Government, would lead you to conclude that the British power, predominant as it is and almost irresistible in India, could never be at rest for the Mahrattas; that they had carried fire and sword into the heart of Bengal or the Carnatic, or at least that their armies were stationed on our frontier, and always ready to invade us. The map on your table is an answer to all these falsehoods. Examine it, and see on what ground these questions were contested, and so many battles have been fought. Was it in *our* territories, or on *our* frontier? No,

Sir ; if you follow the agents of Lord Wellesley, and the armies of Britain, you will find them in the centre, or in the remotest quarters of the peninsula, carrying slavery or desolation into countries, and exacting tribute from people, whose names are hardly known in England. And then we revile the Princes of India, as if *they* were the aggressors, as if *they* were the invaders, and as if there could be no repose or security for the British establishment, as long as any native power in that immense continent was left in a state of independence. We go into their country to charge them with lawless ambition, and we rob them of their property, in order to convict them of insatiable avarice. The day of retribution, I believe, will come, when you are least prepared for it. It is not in the moral order, or in the natural course of human affairs, that a handful of strangers, from this side of the globe, can hold such a dominion very long, on such terms, over so great a portion of the world, and over so many millions of people exasperated by their sufferings, and instructed by their experience. To possess India on Lord Wellesley's principles, you must waste and exhaust England ; that is, you must weaken your empire where its vigour is most wanted, and then will India be worth keeping on that footing ? But I say that, even so, you cannot keep it, if you do not contract your possessions and concentrate your force there. I do not say

you will immediately lose them ; but, in my opinion, you may do worse. You may continue to supply and support them until England is no longer able to bear such a drain, and to carry such a burden. Before that event, another case will present itself, for which it will require all the wisdom of His Majesty's Councils to provide. A perpetual war with France is impossible. Some day or other the necessity of peace will force itself upon us, and be acknowledged by all men. For our security in India, and even to insure the continuance of peace in Europe, it would undoubtedly be desirable that the French might be excluded from that continent, or at least that they should have no other settlement there than the factories necessary for their commerce ; and if compensations, which they would accept of, could be found in any other quarter, I should think it would be our interest to give them even more than an equivalent any where else, rather than have such neighbours in India, where they would always be our enemies, and soon be our rivals. Lord Wellesley's policy establishes the necessity, and supposes the possibility of totally excluding the French from India. A more just, and therefore, as I believe, a wiser system of conduct to the native Princes would have effectually shut that door against France, that is, against the intrigues, the power, and the ambition of France. But does any man believe that, in any negotia-

tion for peace, let it come when it may, Buonaparte will submit to relinquish his claim to a territorial settlement in India, or that he will accept of open commercial factories, to be held at our discretion, without local resources of territory to support them, without the security of fortifications, or garrisons to defend them? The supposition is so improbable, that no rational conclusion can be deduced from it. But if that event, which I hold to be certain, should take place; if he should persist and succeed in demanding the re-entrance and re-establishment of the French in India, the fatal folly, which has opened every Indian heart to receive them, will then come home to you. As soon as they have got a sufficient European force, in the proper quarter, ready to act, and have taken their measures in concert with the native powers, the battle, you will then have to fight, will be, not for the territory or the property of others, but for your own existence. Many victories, dearly bought, can give you nothing more than external security, which you might have had without them. But beware of a defeat. A hundred thousand Romans were massacred in one day in Asia Minor, by the order of Mithridates. In the mean time, without supposing the probability of extreme disasters, admitting that surface and solidity are synonymous, and that present success is equivalent to future security, the question I ask is, what is your imme-

diate profit? where is the direct advantage you derive from these hazardous enterprises, in which the fraud would be useless if it were not supported by force, and the exertion of the force costs you more in one year than the success of it will repay in many? Let those, who are informed, inform us, what solid benefit do you derive from the destruction or slavery of so great a portion of mankind? Lord Wellesley says that he has acted in obedience to the orders of the Court of Directors. I call upon the Court of Directors to state to this House what they have positively gained by these wars with the Mahrattas; at what price these victories have been purchased; and whether, on the whole, the affairs and situation of the India Company are materially improved by that system of policy, on which their property has been spent and their safety hazarded? Of what use is the possession, if it makes no return? It is not for *me* to answer these questions; nor do I believe they can be fairly answered in the affirmative by any man. But I can tell you what you have paid for your successes, and what you have lost by your acquisitions; and I shall leave it to the Court of Directors to balance the account. I can shew you, that you have exchanged the solid security of a very great and profitable, though a limited possession, for the precarious tenure of an unbounded dominion, which does not pay you while you hold it. The

solid contents bear no proportion to the superficial measurement. You know that your establishments must keep pace with your acquisitions, and are very likely to outrun them. You are told that your territorial income increases with your expence. If that be true, why were you twenty millions in debt in India two years ago, and even before the *heavy pressure* of the Mahratta war on your finances could have been materially felt *? The India Company are obliged to send above a million a year in bullion out of England to purchase an investment; and it ought to be so applied. In fact, it goes directly to the pay of armies, which are said to be paid by subsidies, or by the revenues of countries acquired by the war. Did you ever hear of a conquest that paid its own expences? A trading Company, that trades in war, is a contradiction, and, if it traded with success, would be a prodigy. But these, I suppose, will be called narrow commercial ideas, not commensurate to the dignity or suited to the policy of a great territorial power. My humble understanding, I confess, does not rise to the level of those exalted notions of government, by which, as I conceive, far higher faculties than mine are apt to be misled. In the works of genius or imagination, indulgence may be allowed to fancy and refinement. But the serious affairs

* Lord Castlereagh.

of the world are to be governed by prudence ; the essential interests of mankind can only be provided for by sound and sober judgement animated by benevolence. This enlightened benevolence, I am sure, will be found, upon experiment, the only sure and solid self-wisdom, when the visions and chimeras of cruel vanity have disappeared, and left nothing behind them but sorrow, disappointment, and ruin. The Directors of the India Company, I know, have no real jurisdiction over the politics, nor control over the politicians of India ; and deeply it is to be regretted, that they have only a nominal authority over those great interests, which the Legislature acknowledges to belong to them, and professes to have committed to their care. If there be no alternative, if there be no choice left but between their plain reason, and those vulgar mischievous faculties, which are called brilliant talents, I know what the option ought to be. In every rational sense of success, I believe the sound discretion of the India Company would be the most successful, as I am sure it would be the safest guide. It is a wretched and ruinous occupation, to act only to be talked of. But, even if it were otherwise ; if personal fame were allowed to be a laudable object of ambition, and great actions to be the means of acquiring it, there is one ingredient essential and indispensable, even in this sense, to any rational idea of

eminence. That ingredient is difficulty. Now, in fact, there is nothing so easy, or even that requires so little personal resolution, as to disturb the peace of the world, and to unsettle the order of human affairs. Power alone, without a particle of skill or a ray of genius, can do more mischief in a day, than wisdom and industry can repair in a century. Whereas, if we are to judge by the little good that is attempted, and the still less that is done, we are bound to conclude that nothing is so difficult as to do good to mankind. They, who look for any pursuit or object, of *that* quality, in the late transactions in India, I think will be disappointed. But perhaps it may be expected that some magnanimity in the conception, or something frank and noble in the execution of these enterprises, will furnish a consolation to those, who do not suffer by them, for the misery and ruin of India, and for the sacrifice of thousands of the best and bravest of our own people. Assuredly, *that* is not the character of *our* proceedings against the Mahrattas. When the Tartar conqueror entered India, he said, "I come to conquer you. Submit to my dominion, and I promise to protect you." And so they found it, at least as long as the government continued in the family of Tamerlane. I am sorry to say that this would not be an accurate description of a modern British conquest. *We* proceed on other principles, and make our way to success by very

different professions. Our views are always *amicable* and *liberal*. The conduct of the British Government is always *regulated by justice, moderation, and forbearance!* “Our object has been at all times rather to secure than to disturb the feudatory Mahratta States in the possession of their separate territories and distinct rights; yet their characteristic spirit of habitual and lawless ambition has inclined them *to view it with jealousy**!” When we offer to occupy their cities and to garrison their forts, in perpetuity, with British troops, “it is stated to them in the light of a *concession* on our part, tending to the security of *their* interests and the stability of *their* dominion, not as directed to objects in any degree necessary to the security of the British empire in India!” Concerning their own interests, they are supposed to have no judgement. When these amicable professions fail, we soon resort to a different language, more sincere indeed, but equally unworthy of the dignity of England. You hear of nothing then but † “the selfish and wicked policy of the Peshwa, the dark complexion of his disposition and character, the disgusting history of his domestic and public conduct, his atrocious machinations, his faithless and sordid policy, his hatred and jealousy of the British name.” The House will recollect that this Peshwa is and has been at all times our particular friend. Even

* Pa. 221.

† Pa. 42, 43, 34, 347.

Scindia was not our enemy before 1803. Till then, he was in alliance with us. His presumption at last, in taking measures to defend himself, is not only not to be endured, but has given him a new character. * “The perfidy and violence of that unprincipled Chief; the corrupt and profligate councils of that weak, arrogant, and faithless Chief, are suddenly discovered. His violence, rapacity, and lawless ambition, are found to have been the main causes of the war with the confederate Mahratta Chiefs.” One would think that Scindia and the Peshwa, supposing this to be their character, were a couple of old Mahratta Statesmen, bred in the school of some Asiatic Machiavel, and by this time long exercised and grown old in the practice of that fraud and falsehood, which passes for policy with their perfidious countrymen. Now the Peshwa is a very young man, of whom a chief of his own family says†, “that he had retired from Poona owing to the thoughtlessness of youth!” And Scindia, after all, is ‡ “an inexperienced youth, who as yet could form no correct judgement of his own true interests!” In another place, Colonel Collins says, “he is an inexperienced youth, and, as I understand, not at all conversant in business.” I have refrained from saying any thing of the war with Holcar; first, because it was but just begun, I mean at the date of the last advices received in-

* Pa. 35, 157, 259. † Pa. 363. ‡ Pa. 5, 13.

directly by Bombay; secondly, because Lord Wellesley has not yet thought fit to give the Directors any account of the causes, commencement, or progress of this war. All we know is, that, on the 15th of December 1803, it was declared by Lord Wellesley, that Holcar, * “having committed no act of hostility against the British Government, has hitherto been considered as a friend;”—“that he is an adventurer, who possesses no other means of subsisting his troops, than by plundering; and not to be considered as an established power in India:”—though, in another place, he is stated to be † “a member of the Mahratta empire.” That, on the 24th of March 1804, there was every reason to expect an amicable termination of the negotiations with him; and that, on the 16th of April, Lord Wellesley informs the Governor of Bombay of “his determination to commence hostilities against Holcar, from Indostan and the Decan, at the earliest practicable period of time.” Of the event or progress of this war, at this day, a full year after its commencement, we know nothing; but, after the reduction of Scindia and Boosla, it certainly is not to be presumed that an inferior Chief can hold out very long against us. In all these voluntary wars, without entering into questions of justice or necessity, it appears to me, that even the final

* Pa. 258.

† Pa. 100.

profit, if any, I mean to the Public, is very remote and uncertain ; whereas the losses and inconveniences, which attend them, are immediate and unquestionable. I shall not now enter into the state of the Company's finances, which in effect are the revenues of the Government of India, or into their debts abroad, or their difficulties at home. For that discussion, a better opportunity will offer, when the Noble Lord brings forward the India Budget of this year *. I shall therefore confine myself to some other considerations, suggested by the subject, and not less important than that of the revenues. In the year 1801, the military establishment of Europeans recommended by His Majesty's Ministers and adopted by Parliament, for the service of India, amounted to twenty-one thousand men, in addition to those of the Company, which now I believe are not recruited, but which it would be very advisable to keep up, if it were only as a nursery of non-commissioned officers for the Sepoy corps : the whole may be reckoned at about 25,000 men. If that force was necessary some years before the late addition to your territories and extension of your frontier were thought of in England, I suppose it ought to be augmented now, or at least that it cannot safely be diminished. For to say, as it has been said, that your frontier is contracted by the

* The India Budget, annually laid before Parliament, was omitted for this year 1805.

increase of your possessions, or, in other words, that, the more you conquer, the less you have to defend, seems to me very like a contradiction. If such a proposition could be true, you ought to reduce your army and lessen your expence. I know very well the purpose, which these phrases are intended to answer. Even nonsense has some meaning, at least in its application. On the principle so assumed, economy and conquest go hand in hand, and keep an equal pace. A just and necessary war not only furnishes a supply, but creates a saving. For my part, Sir, I have no idea of a thrifty conquest, or that they, who make it, will not begin with helping themselves. The profit in reversion will be cheerfully bequeathed to the Public. The establishment of Europeans is the fundamental security of your India possessions, and the main stay of your empire. A well-disciplined army of Sepoys may be depended on for ordinary services and, to a certain degree, against native enemies. But, in a situation of real hazard, and much more in the case of a reverse, I am of opinion that neither their courage nor their fidelity ought to be relied on, unless they are at once encouraged and kept in awe by a powerful reserve of European troops. These last, in my judgement, ought to be spared and saved as much as possible, not harassed by unnecessary marches, not placed in the front of every battle, or commanded to storm every breach. It is natural

enough for a commanding officer to resort, in the first instance, to the instrument that cuts best. The Europeans of course are most employed and most exposed, and suffer accordingly. The history of India furnishes no example of such a slaughter of British troops, as has happened in the last two years. I do not know to what number the effectives fit for service are actually reduced; nor would I state it, if I did. But this part of your military force is invaluable; because it is extremely difficult to recruit them, and because it requires a long time to prepare them for the service, and to inure them to the climate. The numbers, who die by the sword, fall short, as I believe, of those who perish by other means, and whom you never hear of. Now, Sir, if this establishment of the King's troops be not kept up, it is a mere deceit, which deceives nobody but yourselves, and leaves your possessions without any solid security. But, supposing it to be completed by constant supplies from England, it is not easy to conceive how such numbers of picked men can be spared at any time from the population of this country, and especially in the present state of Europe. Then consider what the consequence of maintaining such an establishment, sooner or later, must be in India. When the renewal of the Company's charter in 1793 was debated in this House, you heard some strong opinions, vehemently expressed by Lord Melville, of the dan-

ger of colonization in that country, and the ruinous effects, with which such a perpetual drain upon the population of Britain must be attended. On that subject, his fears were not to be quieted. So he renewed the charter, and laid the foundation of such a military establishment of Europeans, as never had been thought of before. Now, Sir, I believe it will not be disputed that twenty-five thousand armed men are very likely to have a proportionate number of women and children, and that sooner or later they will take what land they please, and make their own settlement. Whether colonization, in any other form, be good or evil, a military colony, I presume, is of all the most liable to objection. They may possibly keep the conquered country against the natives, but they will keep it for themselves. They, who profess to dread colonization in India more than I do, ought not to leave this view of the question out of their contemplation. The event, to which I have alluded, may be remote or improbable, not in its own nature, but because other events are more likely to occur at an earlier period. On the present plan of holding all India by subsidiary treaties, which, in plainer English, means nothing but to place garrisons in all the principal cities, your military force, whatever it is, must be thinly distributed in detachments too distant from each other to be capable of giving mutual assistance if they were separately attacked, or to be readily

united if the occasion should require it. Look at the map, and see how your army is and must be divided, from Delhi to Agra, from Agra to Ugein, to Indore, to Nagpour, to Poona, to Hyderabad, to Seringapatam, and to Cape Comorin. In the mean time, your settlements on the two coasts must be stripped of a considerable part of their defence. I put the case, against which I suppose you mean to be guarded, of a future combination among the natives, assisted by the French: for otherwise, if that case were impossible, your present precautions would be superfluous. To drive the native Princes into such a combination, I cannot conceive a measure more effectual than this of placing garrisons in their capital cities. It is the most offensive to their pride, and the most galling to their feelings. It not only robs them of their personal and even domestic freedom, but of all appearance of dignity in the eyes of their subjects. It is not so much the pay or the burthen, it is the presence of these troops that degrades and afflicts them. They would much rather pay a greater subsidy to support them at a distance, where I should think they might be stationed with greater security and advantage; I mean upon our own frontier, in large bodies, in regular cantonments connected by posts, and within reach of one another. On that principle, the main body of your military power would be at all times ready to assemble and act together. I leave it to officers

of experience in the Company's service, to inform you, on which of the two plans the discipline of your armies is most likely to be preserved. On that point many serious considerations occur, which I shall not enlarge on. At great distances from the Commander in Chief, there may be a gradual relaxation of discipline, of which he cannot be apprized. The Sepoy corps may not be kept complete. Wherever they are stationed, the service their officers like best is the collection of the revenues. Your Hindoo Sepoys may be exposed to seduction in the cities, which are the residence of Princes of their own religion, and your Mussulmans in those of the Mahomedans. These separate commands are a sure road to fortune, and will be perpetually solicited at the seat of government, and always given to those who have most interest, or who know the shortest way to preferment. The unavoidable tendency of this system, if I am not greatly mistaken, is to weaken and corrupt your whole military establishment.

The substance of what I have now submitted to your consideration, amounts, as I think, to a serious charge against the system and practice of Lord Wellesley's government, or the greater part of it. I have no personal interest to serve, or animosity to gratify in stating these opinions. My intention and my endeavour has been to do a public service by suggesting to the

House, and particularly to His Majesty's Ministers, what I think right notions, on a subject, on which my attention has been fixed, without a variation of view or principle, during thirty years, and not to give useless pain or offence to any individual. I know how Lord Wellesley is supported; and for that reason, as well as from my own sense of justice, should be as ready to approve as to condemn his conduct, if an opportunity offered. There is one of his public acts, which I can mention with pleasure and approbation, because it is honourable to the British character, and right in itself, on a higher principle than mere policy, I mean the attention and respect, which Lord Wellesley has paid to the most unfortunate representative of the race of Tamerlane, the Mogul, *Shā Allum*. I am not aware of any "important benefits", which can now be derived from a renewed connexion between His Majesty and the British power in India: nor would I mix any consideration of that kind with the just and generous office of relieving so great a person from the accumulated calamities, which have descended upon him. Except the fall of the House of Bourbon, completed by the murder of the last, and, as I believe, the most innocent of its Princes, I know of nothing so awful as that state of inconceivable misery and

degradation, in which the last of the House of Timour still survives the destruction of his empire, and the utter ruin of his family. In relieving such a person from such unparalleled afflictions, Lord Wellesley has acted well: and I should equally concur with him in the liberality of that act, considering who is the object of it, if we were not, as we are, in possession of his inheritance. Having said so much of Lord Wellesley's administration, to say nothing of himself, I mean always in his public character, would look like affectation. As far as I can judge from his voluminous writings and incessant occupations, he appears to me to be a person of no inconsiderable ability, of uncommon industry, and everlasting activity. They, who read his correspondence, will be at a loss to conceive, how the pen could ever be out of his hand, or when he could allow himself a day's relaxation, or a night's rest. That so determined an enemy to his own repose should not be a steady friend to the tranquillity of others, is not very wonderful. As to the general merits and final result of his government, the choice of his successor says every thing that I could say of it, and practically perhaps in stronger terms, than I should make use of, because his removal is the act and confession of his friends. The remedy indicates the disorder. With respect to my Lord Cornwallis,

I have already taken an opportunity to declare my confidence in his principles and in his prudence. We want those principles and that prudence more than ever; and I do not believe that the Noble Lord has a relation or a friend, who wishes him success more heartily than I do. The motion, with which I shall conclude, is not directed to personal accusation or to parliamentary censure. My purpose is to do a public service; not to criminate, but to correct; by engaging the House of Commons to revert to their principles, to avow them once more, and to adhere to them hereafter. The vote and declaration I am going to propose, will be a weapon in Lord Cornwallis's hand, with which we ought to arm him. It is not easy for the wisest man to do perfectly right, after infinite wrong has been done. Many steps must be trodden back, before the right road can be recovered. They, who are able to estimate the difficulty of the task, which Lord Cornwallis has undertaken, will not think it superfluous to encourage and support him, in the execution of it, by all the authority of Parliament. I therefore move you, Sir, that it may be declared, "That this House adheres to the principles established by its unanimous resolution of the 28th of May 1782, adopted by the Legislature, and made law by two successive

Acts of His present Majesty, in 1784 and 1793; namely, that to pursue schemes of conquest and extent of dominion in India are measures repugnant to the wish, the honour, and the policy of this nation.

APPENDIX.

Extract of a Letter from the Marquis Wellesley to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors, dated 13th July 1804.

“ To every person acquainted with the real nature of the British interest and power in India, the north-west frontier of Indostan must have appeared to be the most feeble part of our vast empire.

“ The power of the *Seiks*, as well as of the *Mahrattas*, and the *Rajpouts*, and other petty states, affords a considerable advantage to the invasion of an enemy coming from the *most distant* parts of the north-west of Asia, or the banks of the *Indus*; and it will be superfluous to remark, that the enterprising spirit of France, or the ambition of *Russia*, or even the violence and rapacity of the *Afghan* tribes or other Asiatic nations, which inhabit the northern and western countries of Asia, *may* have conceived plans of invasion in that part; an invasion, which *would*

have extremely embarrassed the British power in India.

“ However formidable the power of Scindia would be, in case of an increase of his forces by the junction of another enemy, a more pressing and immediate danger in all its consequences has just arisen from the decline of the local authority of Scindia in Indostan; and *that* danger has recently assumed a more alarming aspect in proportion to the accumulated embarrassments of Scindia in the Decan, and to the decrease and general decay of his resources and his power.

“ Scindia has no direct authority over M. Perron and his regular troops. Several examples must be known to you, in which *M. Perron* has openly disobeyed or systematically evaded the orders of Scindia, particularly in the last crisis of that chief's affairs.

“ *M. Perron* is supposed to possess a considerable fortune, and you perfectly well know how strong his desire is to return to Europe.

“ In addition to these remarks, it is proper to inform you, that the vicinity of the regular army of *M. Perron* constantly diminishes the population of the Company's provinces, and dries up the sources of our agriculture, our manufactures, our commerce, and our revenues; as well as the means of recruiting for the army in that country.

“ Among the principal advantages, which the late peace gives us, we must reckon the maintenance of the national character in India, by the moderation, the clemency, and the justice, which the British Government have manifested in the conditions of peace granted to our enemies.

“ Your Hon. Committee will remark with satisfaction, that the total amount of the subsidiary troops in the Decan, constituting a force of 22,000 men, may be employed against Jeshwunt Row Holkar, or any other disturber of the tranquillity of India, without requiring extraordinary succours, or without occasioning any extraordinary addition to the expences of our military establishment. Your Hon. Committee will not fail to see, and duly to appreciate the advantages of an arrangement, by means of which the expences of so great a proportion of the war in India *are defrayed by foreign subsidies*. Whilst we mention this, we cannot overlook the constant state of preparation and equipment imposed upon subsidiary troops.

“ During the course of these marches, the troops suffered severely from excessive heat and want of provisions and forage. A number of excellent officers and soldiers fell victims to the effects of the climate and fatigue.

“ We have taken a considerable sum of money, twenty-four lacks of rupees in the fort of Agra, five lacks at Delhi, besides a number of other

sums taken from Aleghour and other places, which were immediately distributed to the soldiers."

" 19th July 1804.

" The diminution, which the provision of goods for the present year must suffer, cannot be determined at present.

" It is to be hoped that the speedy arrival of a fresh remittance of money from Europe will remove the momentary embarrassment, that has been experienced in the administration of your finances in this Presidency."

Extracts from private Letters from India, intercepted by the French.

" IF Colonel Fawcett had at first joined Smith, instead of keeping his men under arms, he would at least have prevented the country from being ravaged by the enemy; the troops would not have been so harassed; and he would not have lost ten or twelve Europeans a day.

" This rapid march cost us dear; we lost each day twenty or thirty Europeans, and ten times as many natives of every class. The heat was so excessive, that I was myself a witness that out of

seven soldiers, who went to a well to quench their thirst, five fell dead.

“ The thermometer was, during several days, 110, and upwards.

“ How we shall be able to preserve and defend this vast extent of country, I cannot conceive. I think that Lord Wellesley himself will be soon alarmed at the greatness of his conquests; none of which, according to my opinion, will produce revenues enough to defray the expences they occasion.”

Extract of a Letter from the Chairman of the Court of Directors (David Scott, Esq.) to Mr. Ad-dington, dated 14th August 1801.

“ To the harmony, which has hitherto subsisted between these two Boards, may be ascribed in a great degree the PROSPERITY, which has attended the affairs of the East India Company.

“ Situated, Sir, as *you know* the Company to have been for some years, with an immense increasing debt abroad, owing to an expenditure far beyond their revenue; and if even (as is the fact) since the destruction of our most formidable enemy in India, and our acquirement of such rich and extensive possessions, the increased re-

venue falls short of our disbursements, you may believe that the united efforts of the Court must be necessary to find out and apply a proper remedy. In consequence of the above alarming situation, and seeing the prospect of an actual failure of resources for furnishing the usual investments, &c."

THE END.

S. GOSNELL, Printer,
Little Queen Street, Holborn.





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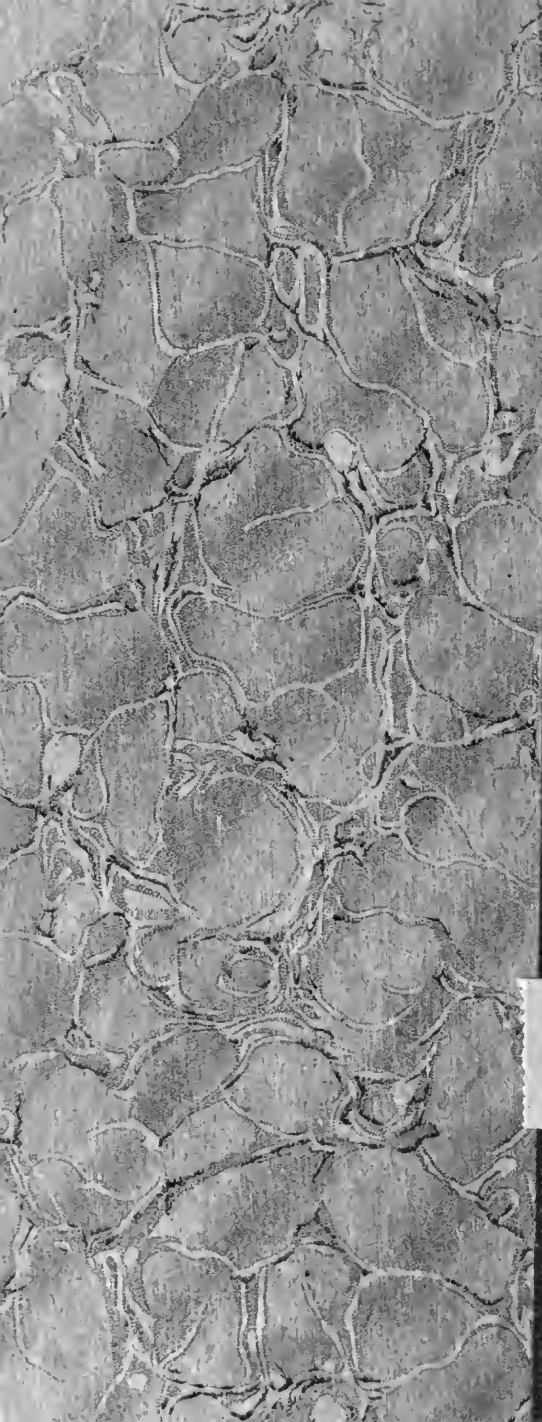
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